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U.S. Ambassador Swears In New Peace Corps Volunteers

(FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) -- U.S. Ambassador Michael Owen officially sworn in 41 new Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) who will live and work throughout Sierra Leone. The swearing-in ceremony took place at the Miatta Conference Hall in Freetown on August 28 and marked the end of a ten-week training program for the new Volunteers.

The 41 U.S. citizens will teach English, science, and mathematics to students in junior and senior secondary schools. In academic year 2013-14, Peace Corps will have 79 volunteers teaching IN every rural district in Sierra Leone.

The Deputy Minister of Education, Science, and Technology Mahmoud Tarawalie; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ebun Jusu; Chief of Staff at State House Richard Conteh; and various stakeholders of the Sierra Leone education sector attended the swearing-in ceremony.

In his remarks, Ambassador Owen talked about the importance of this year's theme of "Education for Life." Ambassador Owen commended the Volunteers for seizing chances to make a long-term impact in their students' lives, and noted the many ways that Volunteers had recently helped students and the communities in which they live. This included starting student and youth clubs, encouraging parents to be involved in their children's education, and helping schools make the best use of limited resources. He said to the Volunteers, "We know that our expectations of you are high but the long history of Peace Corps in Sierra Leone is an indication that there are endless opportunities for success." Ambassador Owen thanked the Volunteers for their service to the United States and Sierra Leone, and he reminded them of the lasting imprint they will have on the lives of so many Sierra Leoneans.

Ambassador Owen thanked the Ministry of Education and the government of Sierra Leone for its unwavering support of Peace Corps. He expressed hope that the partnership between Sierra and the U.S. will grow in the next few years as both the number of Volunteers and the focus of Peace Corps programs increase. Ambassador Owen also expressed gratitude to the host families and communities for their hospitality.

Acting Country Director of Peace Corps Daryn Warner highlighted that last year Peace Corps Volunteers measured a 40 percent improvement in students' confidence level in math, science, and English.

The new PCVs surprised guests with votes of thanks in some of Sierra Leone's local languages. They expressed gratitude to Sierra Leonean families who are hosting them for the next two years.

The U.S. Peace Corps is an independent U.S. government agency, which began with a challenge by then-Senator John F. Kennedy for Americans to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. Since it began in 1961, more than 210,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in 139 countries that have requested assistance. The volunteers serve 27-month commitments and work on issues ranging from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation.

For more information on the Peace Corps, go online to www.peacecorps.gov.

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